A TRIBUTE

To the Memory of

MRS. CHARLOTTE E. SPRAGUE.

The Tribute of a Mourning Husband.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT WEST-SPRINGFIELD,

JULY 1, 1821,

THE SABBATH AFTER THE INTERMENT

OF

MRS. CHARLOTTE E. SPRAGUE,

BY HER BEREAVED HUSBAND,

WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE.

NEW-YORK:

WILEY AND HALSTED 3, WALL-STREET.

1821.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Congregational Library of the American Congregational Association

http://www.archive.org/details/tributeofmournin00spra

TO THE

FRIENDS OF MY BELOVED WIFE,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

WRITTEN IN A FEW HOURS, IN VERY FEEBLE HEALTH,

AND UNDER THE PRESSURE OF

DEEP AFFLICTION,

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

W. B. S.

SERMON.

Job xix. 21.

Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, oh ye, my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.

I have not chosen this passage, my friends, with a view to attempt any thing like a connected discourse; because my feelings forbid such an attempt. I have not chosen it with a view to urge any new claims upon your sympathy, because I know that your hearts have already bled for my affliction. I have not chosen it as an apology for an impatient and complaining spirit, for I am well aware that such a spirit, always unbecoming, is never more offensive, than in the sanctuary of God, and at the throne of grace; and I also know, that in addition to the common obligations of Christian submission which rest upon me, it is my imperative duty, as a minister of Jesus, and as one appointed to lead you to Heaven, now to give you some practical proof of the power of religious consolation. But, my friends, I have chosen this text, as a faithful expression of my feelings, under this bereaving stroke of

Providence; and with a view to suggest from it some remarks, which I hope may have such an influence upon your minds, that you will be able to say, that it is good for *you* that *I* have been afflicted.

There are two thoughts upon which I shall dwell for a moment, which seem to be suggested by the latter clause of the text: *The hand of God hath touched me.*

I. The first is, that the afflictions of the present life are some of them peculiarly grievous. I know, my friends, that it is hard for those who are strangers to adversity to realize its bitterness: they can have but a faint idea of what passes within the heart which is wrung by the disruption of ties which seemed almost entwined with the thread of existence. They can go to the house of mourning and be affected by the tears of others, and by the badges of grief, and by the funeral procession, and by the open grave; but, after all, if they have never felt the rending of these ties themselves, they will be likely to carry away but a feeble impression of the agony of bereavement. Ask the husband or the wife, who has been bereaved of a fond, affectionate companion;—ask the father and the mother who have seen the object of their affections laid low in the dust;—ask the brother or the sister, who has wept over the grave of departed friendship, whether the afflictions of life are to be thought lightly of—and whether we can comfortably sustain them without the aids of Divine grace; and the bursting heart of each will return you an answer. Do not think, my

friends, that I wish to heighten the picture by adding one dark shade which does not belong to it; I have no wish to give an exaggerated account of the ills of life, or to harrow your feelings, by pointing you to scenes of sorrow, into which you are in no danger of being brought. But I do wish to make every one of you who has never yet felt the bitterness of deep affliction, now feel that it is not a light thing to be even touched by the hand of God;—that those chords of tenderness which are strung in the heart cannot be broken without sending a thrill of agony through the soul;—and that if you think to pass through the furnace of deep affliction without the consolations of religion, you are only laying a plan to harrow your souls with anguish. You will find enough to bear in the day of adversity without the burden of unpardoned sin: there will be no excess of consolation, if you have all that which arises from an unwavering confidence in God, and from communion with a throne of grace. The reason, therefore, for my suggesting this thought, that the afflictions of life are some of them very grievous, is, that a correct impression of them may lead you all to gain a seasonable interest in the consolations of religion. Rely upon it, that whatever you may now think, when the day of adversity actually comes, and the woes of life come clustering around you, you will need the support of an almighty arm; and if you have not that to rest upon, you will find your hearts torn and rent by the severest anguish.

II. The other thought to which I wish to direct your attention is more consolatory: "the hand of *God* hath touched me;" that is, my afflictions have not sprung out of the ground; they are not the product of chance; but they are directed by Infinite goodness, and unerring wisdom. The hand which hath touched me is the hand of God—it is the hand of my Father.

And what, my Christian friends, is more consolatory than the thought, that all these dark dispensations are planned and executed by our Heavenly Father; that though there are many revolutions of the wheel of Providence which we cannot comprehend; nay, though there may seem to be a wheel within a wheel, and the mighty machine may confound us by its magnificent and mysterious operations; yet every movement is guided by an arm, absolutely resistless, by wisdom, which can never err, and by goodness, which does not even overlook the falling of a sparrow. "The hand of *God* hath touched me,"--not the hand of an impotent, or short-sighted, or malicious mortal,—not the hand of one who afflicts in cruelty, and has no concern for my happiness; but a paternal hand,—the same which pours blessings into my cup, from day to day, and which never wields the rod, but with the most kind and merciful designs. Is not this enough, O my soul, to assuage the tempest that has been raging within thee, and to bring back the calm, and sunshine, and quiet, which affliction had well nigh chased away? Is it not as much as mortals should desire, to know, that though "God

moves in a mysterious way," yet He "is his own interpreter;" that though "He rides in the whirlwind," yet "He directs the storm."

I have felt unwilling, my friends, that the afflictive dispensation which has robbed me of my beloved wife, and withered and blighted my fondest earthly hopes, should pass, without making some good impression upon you; and I now feel as if I could adopt the words of an Apostle, and say, "If we are afflicted, it is for your sake." I trust you will not think it an offence against the decorum that is due to this sacred place, that I should here bring before you the subject of my own personal afflictions: and while I earnestly entreat your prayers on my behalf to the God of all consolation, let me suggest a few things which have already been taught me in the school of adversity.

I have a word to say, as the result of my own experience, to those who sustain the endearing conjugal relation. I look over this assembly, and see many husbands and wives, with whom life glides smoothly and pleasantly away, and who have, perhaps, hardly ever thought upon the bitterness of separation. There are some who have sustained this relation but a short time, and who, doubtless, feel as if there is much domestic comfort laid up in store for them, for many years. Perhaps the morning of domestic life has dawned upon you with unusual serenity: every circumstance attending your connection may seem to convey a promise of long continued usefulness and happiness in life.

You are surrounded by a multitude of friends, to whom you are tenderly attached, and who study to promote your happiness.

The roses of health may sit blooming upon your cheeks, the fire of vivacity may kindle in your eye, the means of a comfortable worldly support may be at hand, and your hearts may be wedded together, in all the strength and tenderness of conjugal endearment. You may be able to see the pledge of your mutual affections in the smiles and playfulness of helpless infancy; and as you gaze with tenderness on the little object of your love, you may think how rich a blessing it will be to its parents, and how you shall carry it together to be baptized in the sanctuary, and how often you will commend it, in your retired devotions, to the protection and grace of God. Do you say that all these things look fair and promising? Be it so: but say not, I beseech you, that this prosperous beginning is any pledge that you are to be exempted from keen affliction; or, if such a delusion has taken possession of your breast, let the mournful experience of your minister drive it away. The ties which bind you together may seem strong to-day, and to-morrow you may feel all the agony of a disruption. If you are a husband, you may see the wife of your fondest affections laid in a moment upon the bed of death; and that, too, when you anticipated nothing but health, and vigour, and enjoyment. You may see the eye, that used to sparkle with brilliancy and intelligence, growing inanimate, and

glassy, and deathlike: you may see the countenance, on which the smile of contentment and affection rested, and which, on your return from abroad, had met you a thousand times with all the earnestness and loveliness of fond affection, exhibiting the paleness and languor of approaching death;—the voice which used to address you in accents of kindness, is hushed; and you are obliged to listen to the heaving, broken sigh, and are left to interpret the expressive, heart-speaking look of conjugal affection. You may watch around that bed, with the most painful anxiety. You may ask the physician, with all the agitation and grief which a bitter and protracted suspense can inspire, whether your beloved companion is beyond the reach of medicine; you may find each ray of encouragement awakening a thrill of joy, and after a sad alternation of hopes and fears, you may, at last, hear, accompanied by sobs of anguish, the mournful intelligence that *she is gone!* But, is she gone? Yes, the object of your fond affection; she with whom you have conversed, and wept, and prayed, has fled from your embrace, and left behind only a lifeless body for you to follow to the grave. And then you will go and gaze upon that corpse with anguish, Oh! how bitter; and every feature will recal some expression which once delighted your heart: and you will, perhaps, involuntarily speak to the lifeless clay, and then feel a fresh burst of agony at not receiving an answer. At length, you will mingle in the funeral procession;—you will approach the grave, bowed down with grief, and covered with mourning;—

perhaps you may ask to be spared the pang of hearing the clods rattle upon the coffin;—and when you return from the grave, and think that you have taken the last look of her mortal remains, you will find, that there was one fountain of sorrow in your heart which, until then, had not been opened; and Oh! how every object will seem to you arrayed in habiliments of woe! You will go from one apartment of your dwelling to another, and at every step, there will start up a thousand fresh recollections of your departed friend. The bed from which she had been lifted will be covered with a silent gloom;—the place which she had occupied at your table will present a dismal vacancy;—and when you bring your family around the domestic altar, you will feel as if your devotions are performed in solitude. When the shades of night come on, and you try to resign yourself to sleep, the image of your departed companion will pass before your mind, in a thousand forms; and whether sleeping or waking, the same beloved object will be the burden of your contemplations. When the morning dawns, though the gloom of the night will vanish, the gloom which has gathered over your heart may be thicker than ever. You may walk abroad, and see the sun shining in his strength, and the trees verdant with foliage, and the fields blooming with flowers, and the birds chanting their pleasant songs;—but the contrast between the scenes without and the scenes within you, will convert even the charms and melodies of nature into images of gloom. You will meet your friends, from day to day, who will greet you

with their accustomed smiles; and as you mingle with the world, you will be confounded by the din of business and care. You will, perhaps, go into the social circle, where all is activity and cheerfulness, and where every thing will be done to drive away your sorrows; but, after all, the burden of grief *will* oppress your heart, and your affections will be going away from the scenes around you, to linger about the grave which has received her into its bosom. Do you think, my friends, that this is a fiction, and that the picture which I have held up to you is only the product of a gloomy fancy? Rely upon it, it is not so. This heart, rent and torn by affliction, testifies that it is not so. Yonder grave, where but the other day you saw so many of my hopes deposited, proclaims that it is not so. And, my friends, you who are united in the conjugal relation, let me urge you to bring home to your minds, as far as you can, this scene of separation, and try to prepare for it. Do not live, as if this connection would continue always; rather live, as if you felt that any day might close it. And if you would lay a foundation for comfortable reflections after a separation, cultivate an intimate knowledge of each other's hearts, with reference to the concerns of eternity. I would affectionately ask the husbands and wives who are before me, whether this be not a subject which they too much neglect;—whether, while they communicate with unreserved freedom upon every thing else, they do not say too little of that which interests them most. Rely upon it, my friends, if you have never known what it is to join each

other in the devotions of the closet, or to unbosom to each other the inmost feelings of your hearts, upon the great realities of religion, you are mingling a bitter cup for yourselves against the day of separation. And, on the other hand, if you cultivate this acquaintance with each other's spiritual concerns, and exert yourselves to prepare each other for heaven, and if you often send up your united prayers to a throne of mercy, the reflection that you have done these things, will hereafter cast a piercing beam through the gloom that will collect over the grave of your companion, and it will come to your troubled soul like a voice from heaven, speaking peace and consolation.

I might also attempt to impress this providence, as a monitory call to the living, and especially to those in the morning of life, to be ready for a sudden death. You see that the grave is without any order, with respect to age, character, happiness, and usefulness. You may think, that there are ties which bind you to the world, which cannot be broken, without defeating some important design of Providence; and that if you should be taken away, it would make a chasm in some department of useful exertion, which could not easily be filled. But, my friend, do not think yourself of so much consequence in the execution of the Divine purposes, but that God can, and may do without you; and when the arrows of death are flying thick around you, be not so infatuated as to think yourself invulnerable. If the strongest, tenderest chords which are ever strung in a human bosom, had been any security from death, I

should not have appeared before you to day as a mourner; and if the most vigorous health, and the hopes of a widowed mother could have availed against the demands of the grave, you would not have been called to the burial of one, who had himself but just returned from mingling in funeral solemnities.* It is my earnest prayer, that these dispensations may bring you to realize the certainty, the solemnity, and the suddenness of death;—that they may teach the young to devote their earliest days to the service of their Maker; and that you may all reap a harvest of spiritual consolation and advantage from the afflictions of your Minister.

I know, my hearers, that it would not become me to indulge my feelings, in publicly dwelling upon those traits of character in my beloved wife, which I had allowed myself to consider as a pledge, not only of the highest domestic felicity, but of extensive usefulness in this congregation. I may say, however, without any violation of decorum, that though the short period of her residence among you did not allow of an extensive acquaintance in the society, she was much devoted to you in her feelings, and often devoutly prayed for your spiritual prosperity. For the affectionate attentions which you have manifested to us both since

---

*A young man of eighteen years of age, who had attended the funeral of Mrs. S., was drowned an hour afterwards, in the Agawam river, and was interred the next day.

our connection, and particularly to her, during her late illness, she felt the warmest gratitude ; and often spake with feeling of the kindness of that Providence which had cast her lot amidst so affectionate and beloved a people. Had she lived, you will allow me to express my conviction, that you would have found her more and more devoted to your interests, and would have had little reason to complain of any lack of prudence, activity, or Christian beneficence.

My mourning mother and other friends, who are called with me to drink of this bitter cup, what shall I say to you in this day of our adversity. The only consolation which I can offer, must flow from a heart more deeply wounded than your own. But I hope we have all learned, ere this, to repair submissively to a throne of grace. Go where we will beside, all will be dark, and blank, and cheerless: but here there is a refuge from which the most violent storms of adversity can never drive us. Let us endeavour to attain and preserve that state of mind, the spontaneous effusion of which shall be, "thy will be done." And what language can express the gratitude which we ought to feel, that we do not sorrow as those who have no hope ;—that we have the comforting confidence that the triumph which death has gained now, will be reversed at the resurrection; and that in the departure of our beloved friend, Heaven has gained an immortal soul. Henceforth, let us compose our troubled spirits, though we will never cease to cling to the memory of

that friend with the fondest affection. We will suppress the rising sigh and the gushing tear, but we will not strive to banish from our minds one dear or grateful recollection. When we are reminded by the chasm which we find in our domestic circle, and by the deep melancholy which has settled upon all the objects around us, that the place which once knew her, will know her no more; we will think of her as occupying a station of far higher dignity and more extensive usefulness. And when we approach the dwelling in which her presence has shed light and comfort, or when we wander by the river, and recal her admiring expressions of the works of nature, we will be comforted by the thought, that she occupies a heavenly mansion, and wanders on the banks of the river of life. And when we walk into the grave-yard, and linger about that spot, and see the green grass growing over it, should our hearts begin again to break with the agony of fresh recollection; oh! then we will look up to Heaven, and all our faith shall fasten upon Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life. Yes, my beloved mourning friends, we believe the separation will be but short: yet a little while, and we shall see her again; shall see her, as we confidently trust, arrayed in the robes of immortal beauty, and entered on a career of endless bliss. God, most merciful, sustain us, and comfort us, and in thine own best time, wipe our tears away!

I cannot close this discourse, my beloved people, without affectionately thanking you for all your kind

attentions to my departed wife, and for your sympathy with me and my friends in this time of our affliction. I know not what better I can do for you in return, than to commend you to God and the word of his grace; and especially to implore for you a sanctifying influence, that you may have occasion to remember my affliction as the channel through which the richest spiritual blessings have flowed into your souls. What the design of Providence, with respect to myself, may be, I know not, nor would I be impatient to know. Should my life be continued, and my health restored, sure I am that by the grace of God, all my strength and affections shall be consecrated to your service in the ministry of reconciliation. But if the order of Providence should be different, and you should soon be called to perform the melancholy counterpart to the solemnities in which you were so lately engaged, then be sure that I shall bear you on my heart to the grave: and my last and dying prayer shall be, that every member of this beloved flock may be under the peculiar guardianship of the Heavenly Shepherd;—that a light may break forth from this candlestick resembling in purity and brightness that which for so many years shed its lustre around you; and that you and I may meet before the throne, and have occasion to review my ministry, however short, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

APPENDIX.

The following is extracted from the Springfield Hampden Federalist, of June 27th.

Died, at West-Springfield, on Monday evening last, Mrs. Charlotte E. Sprague, wife of Rev. William B. Sprague, and daughter of the late Gen. Eaton, æ. 23.

A friend, a wife, a mother,
Within whose breast, the peaceful virtues
Lov'd to dwell—
Thine infant image, here below,
Sits, smiling on a father's woe—
Oh, early lost—in virtue's fairest prime—
Thy pieties supply'd life's want of time:—
Thy spirit to Himself the Almighty drew,
Mild, as the sun exhales the ascending dew.

The following is from the same paper of July 4th.

Memoir of Mrs. Charlotte E. Sprague.

It is an employment ever congenial to the best feelings of the heart, to portray the character and sketch the lives of those whom we have dearly loved, when their loveliness and their worth are to be known only

through the sad yet delightful medium of remembrance. The heart that lingers with the "joy of grief" round each recollection of past interviews and enjoyments, longs to embody those endearing traits of character which have so riveted the affections, and give to excellence that notoriety and perpetuity which it may justly claim. These feelings have induced the writer of these remarks to attempt a sketch, very imperfect it is true, of the life and character of Mrs. Charlotte E. Sprague, whose death was announced last week. We know similar feelings have many times led their possessors to draw into public view those upon whose memory might as well have rested the shade of oblivion. But we very much misjudge if the notice which we now take of one whose worth was so eminent, and the circumstances of whose death were so striking, can be deemed injudicious.

Mrs. Sprague was the second daughter of the late Gen. Eaton. She was born at Brimfield, October 24, 1797. The dawn of her day was not of so peculiar an aspect as to predict at all, the alternate clouds and sunshine which characterised its advance and close. When she was a year old, the hearts of her parents were rent with fears, that she was to be removed from their embrace. She was so very ill that her life was not expected from one hour to another. It pleased God, whose late mysterious dispensation has caused the hearts of her friends to bleed, then to spare them an agonizing separation. She early manifested those

amiable and excellent qualities which were more fully developed in after life. She had a sweet and affectionate disposition. One trait of character for which she was then and ever after distinguished, was her love of truth. She evinced at all times the greatest regard for her word; the threats of punishment would not induce her to swerve from it, and she has been known to sacrifice the tenderest sensibilities rather than break it. After this it will be unnecessary to say that firmness entered into the composition of her character; not that which often degenerates into obstinacy, but which peculiarly fitted her for supporting those scenes of affliction through which she was called to pass, and for performing those duties which in the domestic relations devolved upon her. At the age of eight years she was sent abroad to school. The one at that time selected as the best, was Miss Patten's, at Hartford. Here she made as much proficiency as should be expected from such a child, without the fostering care of a mother. She was there, with an interval of a few weeks, about seven months. At the age of ten years she went to Boston, to reap the benefit of an attendance at the schools of the metropolis. The sun of prosperity shone upon her at this time with meridian splendour. Gen. Eaton was in the mid-day of his glorious career, and being at this time in Boston, his daughter was much noticed and caressed by families of distinction. A smaller measure of notoriety might have intoxicated a weaker mind or a less gentle heart. Per-

haps it was not without effect here, yet the ills which might have resulted from it were not afterwards perceptible. The subject of this memoir possessed an uncommonly gentle spirit: her temper might with propriety be termed peaceable. In her intercourse with her schoolmates, she was not easily offended, and perhaps was never known intentionally to grieve them. Her attention at this period, was, more than at any other, directed to external accomplishments. Music, dancing, and drawing, chiefly occupied her time. For the two first she had a native taste. Her voice was very harmonious, and her friends will long remember, with mournful pleasure, the sweet notes which used so often to delight them. Dancing was a very favourite amusement, until she had learned to prize enjoyments of a more exalted kind. After an absence of four months, she returned to the paternal roof and the bosom of her family, to cultivate those domestic virtues for which she was ever distinguished. Her manners were naturally gentle and easy, but, doubtless, her intercourse with the world at this period assisted to increase that elegance which was so conspicuous in after life.

From the time of her leaving Boston, she spent about five years principally at home, during which she was initiated into those domestic accomplishments which are indispensable to the formation of the best female characters. It was in this interval too that she experienced many painful vicissitudes of fortune. Two

beloved brothers, a father, and a darling sister, who had been the companion of her studies and pleasures, were laid in the rest of the grave. These afflictions accompanied as they were, by aggravating circumstances, bore heavily upon her tender spirit, yet until the last, were not apparently attended by sanctifying influences upon her heart. The death of her sister after a lingering illness in the triumphs of faith, seemed to make an impression of a lasting and serious nature. Whether this affliction would have led her to the mercy-seat is uncertain; but, succeeded as it was by a residence at Hartford, at a time when God was in a wonderful manner visiting that place, the impression was deepened, her soul was rendered solemn, she learned the vanity of earth, the necessity of repentance and a change of heart, and was melted into contrition for her sins—after a season of anxiety and distress, not indeed of the most pungent kind, she was led to trust in the mercy of God through a crucified Saviour, and embraced a hope that her sins were pardoned through his mediation, and for his sake alone.—She returned to her home which was now transferred to Monson, and in the course of her seventeenth year, as is believed, was received into full communion with the Church in that place under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Ely.

We are now to contemplate this lovely woman in a new and far more interesting character, as a disciple of Christ. We feel that we have fallen far short of

our wishes in the portraiture of her moral virtues hitherto, and that no description can embody them before the reader as they are presented to the mental vision of a friend.—We would not insinuate that she was faultless—she bore the stamp of imperfection, yet her character was so clustered round with virtues, that her faults were almost lost in the assemblage. Many traits of her character have been omitted, but we will present them as they appeared when refined by the influences of Divine grace.—In the early part of her religious course she had a degree of vivacity which sometimes approached to gayety. This was gradually lessened by the operation of religious principles, and her deportment, which was always dignified, became still more sedate. Her religion was of a character to manifest itself in the government of her temper and passions. She cultivated, with the greatest care, a mild and forbearing spirit. It has been truly said of her "in her tongue is the law of kindness." Her religious exercises were of an uniform nature. She had a humble sense of her Christian attainments; her patience under suffering was exemplary; the variations of her countenance alone told when she was in pain.—— From the time she became a professed disciple of Christ she gave up vain amusements, some of which had constituted her highest pleasure. To the ball-room, where the elegance of her form and manners might be displayed to the best advantage, she bade a final adieu. In their place, she substituted those re-

fined enjoyments which result from the offices of piety, from friendship and the cultivation of a mind rich by nature, and capable of high degrees of improvement. Her reading was quite extensive, rather miscellaneous, but generally of a solid and serious kind. She read the best poets, and selected with taste and judgment their beauties which she highly relished—she was fond of biography. The Sermons of Dr. Lathrop she much valued—Their simple and perspicuous style was congenial to her taste.

At the age of twenty-one she accepted of an invitation to spend the winter in the family of a scientific friend—the period was prolonged to more than a year, and was principally spent in Troy, New-York. During this time she devoted herself to the study of the sciences, and read a course of history. She obtained a considerable knowledge of Mineralogy and Chemistry, and made great advances in the study of Botany. The last was a delightful employment. She loved to trace the finger of God, so perceptible in the minutest works of creation, and was led often to admire and adore the wisdom and goodness which they evinced. During the season she spent in Troy, her mental accomplishments and spiritual graces were much improved. Her love of nature was heightened by the display of its beauties so eminent around her.—In this place, the excellencies of her character were more fully developed, and she endeared herself much to the circle of her acquaintance.—She returned at the com-

mencement of the year 1820, and in the autumn was united in marriage to the Rev. Mr. Sprague pastor of the first Church in West-Springfield. Into this relation she entered with a deep sense of the responsibility of the station she was to occupy. This sense of its importance never left her, and during the short time she was permitted to continue in this endearing relation, it was her first aim, her most anxious endeavour, to fulfil its arduous duties.——She had every qualification to endear her, and make her useful to the flock over which her husband was placed. Never was a fairer promise of domestic happiness, never was the sun of prosperity more suddenly or deeply obscured. Her character at this time was remarkably matured; her judgment and prudence were eminent. She had experienced many afflictive dispensations, and had been obliged to exert every faculty of her mind; now she reaped the benefits of this early discipline.—She could meet without embarrassment those trials which are inseparable from the conspicuous station she filled. She seemed for some months previous to her death to be trimming her lamp, and girding up the loins of her mind. She entered with peculiar interest into religious conversation and the duties of devotion. Her last sickness was very distressing, and her fortitude and patience were singularly displayed. Her call to attend the bridegroom was sudden. Two days before her death her prospect of recovery was flattering, and her friends indulged the fondest anticipations of her

return to active life. Their hopes were suddenly chilled, her strength was in a moment prostrated, the hand of death touched her, and though the tenderest ties, conjugal and maternal, bound her to life, she bowed in meek and quiet submission to the will of God, and without one murmur or indication of regret, breathed out her soul into His hands.

How great is the chasm here made! A bereaved husband clasps his motherless babe and mourns—a solitary parent, for the fifth time, smitten with the same rod—sisters and brothers who had made her virtues their pattern—friends who have loved her character, and experienced the faithfulness of her affection, all mingle their sympathies and their tears.—But we weep not as those without hope. *She* questioned not the rectitude and goodness of God's dealings, and let *us* lay our hand upon our mouth.

By Rev A. Peters

MEMOIR

OF

MRS. CHARLOTTE E. SPRAGUE.

Died at West Springfield, Mass. June 25th, 1821, Mrs. Charlotte E. Sprague, wife of the Rev. William B. Sprague, aged 23 years.

Mrs. Sprague seems to have moved in a circle which was privileged above the common walks of her sex. We know not that there was any one trait in her character so strongly marked that we might fix on it and say, that in this she surpassed all others. It was the combined excellence of a well proportioned character, rather than the attractive splendour of any one particular attribute which rendered her worthy of a lasting memorial. She possessed a maturity of genius and virtue, and an elevation of mind, in its early developement, which might almost have been taken for the testimony of God that her time on the earth was to be short. We believe her to have been one of those examples of unconscious but superior excellence, which Providence frequently raises up to shew to the world how much of intellectual and moral improvement may be attained within a short period of our probationary state.

Charlotte was the second daughter of the late General Eaton, and was born at Brimfield, Mass. October 24, 1797. In her earlier years, her native vivacity and versatility of mind gave her a keen relish for the world, and this was heightened and cherished by the condition of her birth and family. Her father was, at this time, rising in the brilliancy of his splendid career, and spared no expense in the education of his children. His little daughter moved among the gay. She was caressed and flattered. The bewitching snares of the world were spread in her path; and her ambition, yet unsanctified, was set on distinction in external accomplishments. Until the age of fourteen or fifteen years, scarcely a cloud was seen to settle on her temporal prospects. But now it was time for a deceitful world to begin to shew its treachery. A sad reverse was experienced in the circumstances of her family; and soon it pleased God, in his good providence, that she should follow two beloved brothers, her father, and a darling sister, in quick succession, to the grave. Hitherto she had felt the attractions of the world, but now she saw the fashion of it passing away. The bright star of hope which had glittered on the ocean of life, was now buried in its surges, and earth had lost its charms. She met these afflictions with a high degree of fortitude. Yet still they weighed heavily upon her spirits because she had no better portion than these earthly friendships. *One thing was needful*; and her mind, brought down to the dark valley by these chastenings of the Lord, was prepared to feel its destitution. It was not, however, till the year 1815, when she was residing at Hartford, during a season of special revival of religion in that place, that she became deeply impressed with a sense of her sinfulness, and that by nature she was a child of wrath. With this impression still abiding and increasing, she soon after, returned to Monson, at that time the place of her mother's residence. There too it was a season of heart searching. The Spirit of God was there. The arrows of conviction were fastened deep in her soul, and with a heart bruised and broken, she betook herself to the mercy seat of Jehovah. The Saviour smiled upon her, and spake peace to her troubled spirit. She became a new creature.

"Her tongue broke out in unknown strains,
And sung surprising grace."

At first, however, the kingdom of Heaven within her, was only a grain of mustard seed. The evidence of her acceptance with God was so indistinct that she trembled much while she sweetly hoped. She feared deception. She searched the Scriptures, examined her own heart, and communed with God. By these means, as her knowledge of Christian experience increased, her faith and hope became firmer and stronger. Indeed her path was as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. In the summer of 1816, at the age of seventeen years, she made a public profession of the religion of Jesus. From this time, especially, she began to put on the whole armour of God; and though she was sanctified but in part, and had frequent occasion to mourn over the imperfection that still cleaved to her, yet there appeared a happy consistency between her general character, and her christian profession and hopes. She was a diligent reader of the Scriptures, and of the best Theological writings, and previous to her marriage to the Rev. Mr. Sprague, in the autumn of 1820, she became a proficient in the modern sciences of Chemistry, Botany, and Mineralogy. Her literary taste was also highly cultivated and improved by various reading.

Her introduction by marriage to a station of peculiar responsibility, seemed to awaken into action all her religious feelings. She entered upon her course of life with high hopes indeed, but her ambition was chastened and restrained by the power of religion. The importance of the station which she was now called to occupy, seemed to lie with singular weight upon her mind. She commited her way unto the Lord and his grace was her support. Her husband found in her all that he could desire in a companion for life, while his people rejoiced with him, and respected and loved the friend of his choice. That delicate sense of propriety for which she was distinguished, her affectionate hospitality and kindness, the remarkable union of gentleness and firmness in her whole character, her singular prudence, the constancy of all her feelings, and the increasing ardour of her religious affections, could not fail to secure the strongest attachment of the Society with which she was connected. She was an help meet for him who was to break to that people the bread of life. There was every thing which the most happy connection with an affectionate people could present, to encourage them with the hope of extended usefulness and happiness in the world. But alas, it was only a painted vision. That God who had fixed the measure of their days, by a mysterious stroke, put his hand upon this frail child of mortality, and the grass withered; the flower fell. She suddenly expired amid the tears and prayers of a beloved people, in the embraces of a weeping, widowed mother, and under the parting, prayerful sigh of a bereaved companion, whom she loved as her own soul, leaving an infant child to the protection of the orphan's God.

Oh, my soul, what a heart-rending scene of separation was that! In that moment, what a wide field of promise was overspread with the shadow of death! Yet the Saviour was there with his everlasting arms of mercy. He suppressed every murmur. He granted her uncommon patience in her last painful sufferings, and sustained her by his grace in the dying hour. She trusted in the Lord as her portion forever. He, as a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, seemed to stand over her bed of death, saying, "Sleep, O beloved! *I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*" Mourner! Read this divine promise, full of immortality, as it is; and then wipe away all tears from your eyes. It was better for her to depart. Be silent and open not your mouth because God hath done it.